



## PLANNING FOR CHANGE AND GETTING STARTED

The following six steps can help you begin the process of improving the nutrition environment in your school.

### **1. *Create a Team and Get Buy-In***

A good first step is to bring together a group of interested people and discuss concerns you share. You may be able to start with an existing group, such as a subcommittee of the PTA group, the school board, or the health team of a Montana Behavioral Initiative school. The development of a school health advisory council or team is essential for success.

The team should consist of people who are willing to make a commitment to participate actively and stay involved. Potential team members include the foodservice director, teachers, school counselors and nurses, administrators, parents, and students, as well as community members and leaders. Look for motivated volunteers who can help with the details of your action plans, people who are willing to donate time and effort, since school staff are often already over scheduled. This is where parents (especially those with health backgrounds, such as dietitians, nurses, and educators), community service leaders, extension agents, and others can play an active role. Build a broad-based team, so that the work load can be distributed evenly.

### **2. *Conduct a Needs Assessment***

The next step is for the team to identify areas of the school environment that need improvement. Use the Improvement Checklist in the USDA's Changing the Scene Toolkit, located in the support materials booklet, found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Healthy/changing.html>, or the CDC's School Health Index, which can be found at <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/>.

### **3. *Develop an Action Plan***

Based on the findings of your needs assessment, decide on specific activities that will help achieve the desired improvements. Develop a comprehensive wellness policy that includes recommendations for increasing physical activity and improving the nutrition environment. For an example of a comprehensive school wellness policy contact Montana Team Nutrition at (406) 994-5641 or e-mail Katie Bark at [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov). Determine what materials and resources you will need to complete the activities and what the time frame will be. Use existing resources; incorporate your activities into already existing curriculums/programs. Set times for reviewing successes and resolving problems, make sure your plan includes an evaluation component, and set regular meeting times with your team.

### **4. *Put the Plan Into Action***

Assign responsibilities to specific team members; then get the activities under way. Expect reaction to change—both positive and negative. Stay committed and keep your overall goals in mind.

### **5. *Evaluate***

Review your progress regularly. Recognize success/what works and resolve problems that arise. Your team may need to revise the plan as you go along to make sure you accomplish your goals.

### **6. *Communicate***

Let other people in the community (including the news media) know about your activities. Invite them to participate as often as possible. This will help you win support for your goals, gain recognition for your school, and encourage others to join the team.